

JUN 02 1998

#BXNFMXY CARRIER ROUTE  
#000027105285# 005-DTM 5-39  
SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL SD0000  
701 COMMERCE ST STE 401 37203-3620  
NASHVILLE TN

# THE BAPTIST Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

## Believer: Iranians not enemies, just lost

PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

MAY 28, 1998

VOL. 122

NO. 17

TEHRAN, Iran (BP) — Like other Iranian Muslims, Ali began a search for truth that led him beyond the dictates of the prophet Muhammad.

Ali, who was called a "good Muslim," received a set of Gospels in his mother tongue, Farsi, mailed to him by a Christian broadcaster.

While reading Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount," Ali realized his devout actions were pure — but his sin-riddled thoughts and intentions would separate him from God. He accepted Jesus as the one who died to take away his sin.

Ali survived repeated persecutions from fellow soldiers, government officials, and his own family — and eventually fled to a neighboring country.

There he served as a guide and translator for a Christian group surveying opportunities for sharing the gospel in Iran.

Millions of Persian Iranians like Ali are searching for truth or being prepared by the Holy Spirit for the day they will hear it. Southern Baptists will focus on them during a 24-hour period of prayer and fasting beginning at 6 p.m. on May 29.

Each spring, Southern Baptists

and other "Great Commission" Christian groups devote a day — called the Day of Prayer and Fasting for World Evangelization — for a people group that has not heard the good news of God's love and salvation in Jesus Christ.

Christian strategy coordinators say they are researching Iran for ways to reverse the isolation of Iran's Muslim people groups. They aim to locate the people groups geographically and develop means to reach them.

Under Cyrus the Great, Persia was the center of the world's first empire. Invasions by the Greeks, Arabs, Mongols, and Turks brought diverse cultural influences into the nation.

Signs in modern-day Iran indicate the fundamental Islam that has ruled the country since 1979 is weakening.

President Mohammed Khatami was elected by 70% of the popular vote last year, and he has appointed three women to his upper-level cabinet.

This heralds startling changes in the perception of women in an Islamic culture.

Many American tourists report Iranian hospitality that contradicts the image portrayed by Western media.

The walls of isolation are coming down. Christian broadcasts — like the one Ali first heard — are said to be making headway in the country.

Five years after he was forced to leave Iran, Ali has become an integral part of a team seeking to share the gospel with Iranian Muslims.

His experiences are a tremendous asset, and he desires to see millions of Iranians come to know Jesus.

"Commit Iranians to prayer," says Ali. They are not oppressors, they are the oppressed; and they are not the enemy, they are the lost.

"Put your prayers into action," he adds. "Get involved."

### Looking back

10 years ago

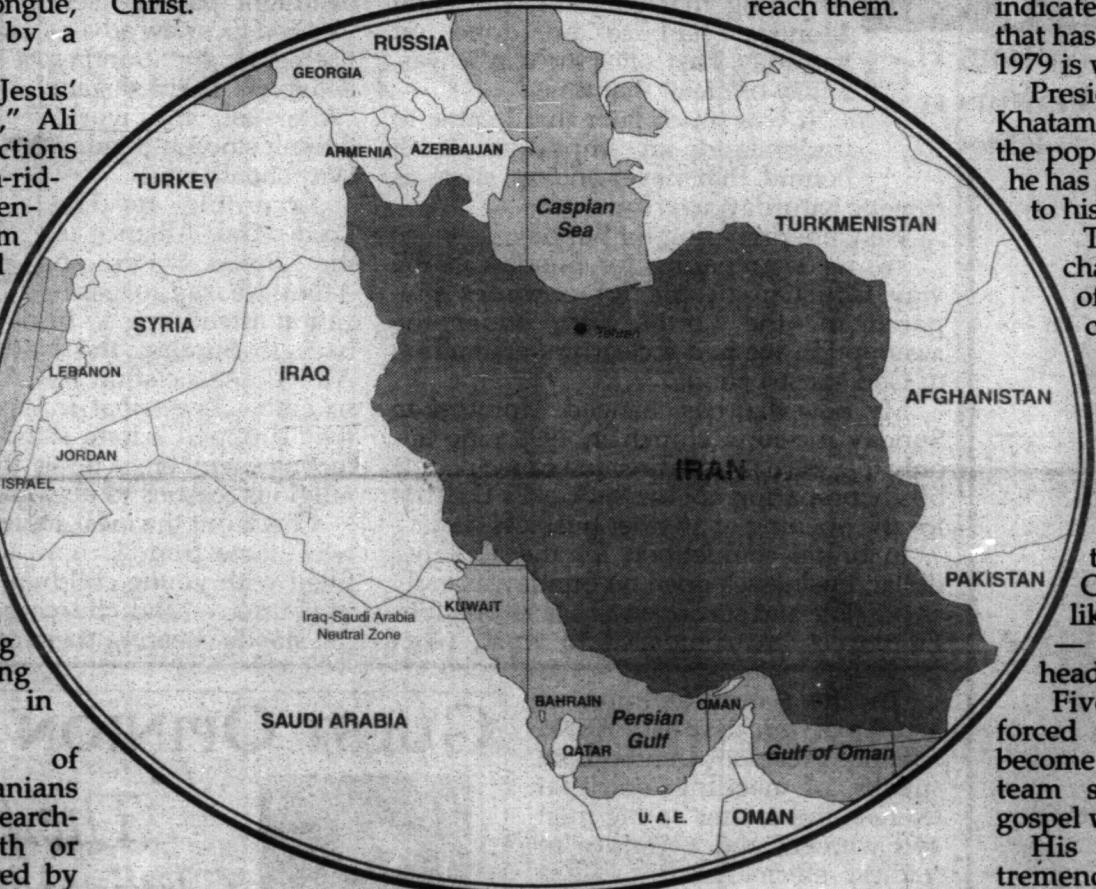
The Southern Baptist Convention is "in a crisis of spirit," says Charles Fuller, chairman of the SBC Peace Committee, in a statement on the State of the SBC issued in advance of the annual meeting scheduled for June 14-16 in San Antonio, Texas.

20 years ago

Silver Creek Church near McComb holds a ground breaking service for a new pastor's home. Construction is underway and expected to be completed in a few months. On a special fund raising day, over \$3,000 is added to the building fund. Harold Gartman is pastor.

50 years ago

The 122nd annual session of Mississippi College will come to a close on June 7 when degrees are awarded to 195 seniors, the largest class in the history of the college. The baccalaureate address will be delivered by the Honorable W. M. Whittington, Congressman from the third district and graduate in the class of 1898.



### Day of Prayer and Fasting for World Evangelization

MAY 29, 1998

### WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

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### SBC membership nearing 16M

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) — Church membership in the Southern Baptist Convention reached 15,891,514 in 1997, according to annual statistics reported by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Membership grew by 197,464, or 1.3%, since last year, according to an annual church profile compiled by the denomination's publishing agency based in Nashville, Tenn.

A total of 412,027 people were baptized in Southern Baptist churches during the year, 8.6% more than last year and the first time in 15 years that baptism totals topped 400,000.

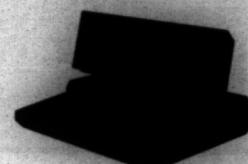
The number of Southern Baptist churches grew two-thirds of 1%, to 40,887. Those churches received more than \$7 billion in total income and in turn gave more than \$936 million to missions. Total value of church property in the SBC exceeded \$32 billion.

On a given Sunday, an average of 5.2 million Southern Baptists attended morning worship services, 6.6% more than last year.

Sunday School enrollment dropped 1.2%, to 8.1 million, while enrollment in Discipleship Training, an education program typically held on Sunday nights, grew 3.6%, to 2.4 million.

After posting gains the previous three years, membership in the Woman's Missionary Union totaled 995,898, down 7% from last year's enrollment of 1.07 million.

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Postmaster: Send changes of address  
to The BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box  
530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Send  
news, communication, and address  
changes to The Editor, BAPTIST  
RECORD, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS  
39205-0530 (601) 968-3800

VOLUME 122 NUMBER 17  
(ISSN-0005-5778)

Published weekly except weeks of July 4  
and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist  
Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street,  
Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$8.35 per  
year payable in advance. Economy plans  
available for cooperating Mississippi  
churches. Periodicals postage paid at  
Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State  
Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items —  
one calendar week prior to requested publica-  
tion date. Advertising — two calendar  
weeks prior to requested publication date.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it  
holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your  
work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the  
Lord your God. Ex. 20:8 (NIV)

In the Mississippi Delta of the 1960s and  
early '70s, Saturday was a beehive of  
activity. There were lawns to mow, auto-  
mobiles to wash, gardens to tend, clothes to  
wash, and an exhaustive list of other family  
jobs to accomplish before nightfall —  
"exhaustive" being the key word.

There were various Saturday  
activities other than around-the-  
house physical work that had to be  
accomplished, too. With two  
teenage boys in the Perkins home, a  
trip to the grocery store was a must  
(enough said). The family car was  
taken to the service station to top  
off the gas, in case an emergency  
arose in the middle of the night.

All business had to be wrapped  
up or put in its place for the begin-  
ning of the next work week.  
Anything that couldn't wait until  
Monday had to be done on  
Saturday. That's just the way it was,  
a way of life at that time.

It was much later that I came to  
understand an important truth  
behind that never-ending swirl of  
frenetic Saturday activity.

We were preparing for Sunday.

We were preparing for Sunday in the  
way Christian people for centuries pre-  
pared for the Lord's Day, under the  
assumption we had a clear understanding  
of God's instructions.

My, how that has changed. Motoring to  
Sunday morning church in 1998, one has  
only to glance in any direction to see people  
busily preparing not for the Lord's Day but  
for the opening of another business day.

In brutal competition for the almighty  
dollar, businesses open on Sunday as early  
as possible and stay open as late as possible.  
Employees are compelled to work, often

during hours they and  
their families would  
otherwise be in church.  
Christians are spend-  
ing their almighty dol-  
lars on Sunday, and  
Christian employers are  
compelling Christian  
employees to work on  
Sunday to chase that  
almighty dollar.

It's a vicious cycle  
unworthy of the follow-  
ers of Jesus (Mt. 6:24).

Where Sunday is  
concerned, it has  
become monumentally  
difficult — if not impos-  
sible — to discern the  
conduct of believers  
from worldly conduct.

We have caved in,  
and don't think for a  
moment that the world  
hasn't noticed.

Have you seen  
overnight package ser-  
vice FedEx's new adver-  
tisements for Sunday  
delivery? Their slogan:  
"After all, the world  
doesn't stop on Sunday.  
Why should we?"

According to The  
Lord's Day Alliance of  
the United States, an  
Atlanta-based organi-  
zation attempting to bring some meaning  
back to Sunday, the National Collegiate  
Athletic Association (NCAA) has become  
so emboldened that in April of this year  
they dropped a long-standing policy pro-  
tecting members schools that declined for  
religious reasons to play games on Sunday.

Check out the local soccer fields on your  
way home from 11 a.m. worship service,  
filled with young children who should be  
in church — and church-going parents in  
the stands cheering them on.

"WELL, I CAN TELL YOU RIGHT  
OFF THAT PART OF YOUR  
PROBLEM IS HANGING OUT WITH  
THE WRONG PEOPLE! I WANT  
YOU IN SUNDAY SCHOOL!"



In the timeless words of the cartoon  
character Pogo, we have met the enemy  
and he is us.

Many explanations and rationales have  
been offered for the manner in which  
Christians have come to conduct themselves  
on Sunday.

Your personal feelings notwithstanding,  
it is inarguable that the world has received  
the message loud and clear: "What's so spe-  
cial about Sunday?"

You're a Christian. What is your answer?

## GUEST OPINION

### *The future of Christian education*

By Jenni Gallagher, member  
First Church, Kosciusko

societal norms, and acceptance  
of the "generation gap" as part  
of normal adolescence.

They quietly acquiesced to  
the removal of the Bible from  
our classrooms. Historically, the  
Bible was the major classroom  
textbook! How can we educate  
our children properly without  
the Holy Scriptures?

Moses records God's plan  
for passing instruction and  
training on to future genera-  
tions in Deut. 6:5-9. Four hun-  
dred years later, David  
describes education from God's  
perspective in Psalm 78:1-8.

2 Tim. 2:15 is familiar to  
most of us: — "study to shew  
thyself approved" — but most  
of us stop there because we  
enjoy man's approval.

Are any of us ready to face  
God and ask him if we have

studied enough to be  
"approved unto God, a work-  
man that needeth not to be  
ashamed, rightly dividing the  
word of truth?"

What is the solution? The first  
part of the solution is to remove  
Christian children from the gov-  
ernment's brainwashing system.

In 2 Cor. 6:17, Paul quotes the  
Lord: "Come out from among  
them, and be ye separate."

Secondly, Christians can  
establish schools. Baptists alone  
could lay the foundation and  
set the standards for spiritual  
and academic excellence.

We have some of the largest  
and best facilities in the nation,  
generally used for three to six  
hours a week. What a waste!

Southern Baptists could  
focus energy on development  
and implementation of an

exemplary educational system  
utilizing the Holy Bible as the  
major textbook.

Activities would be a part of  
education instead of replacing  
important necessities. The spir-  
itual relationship with Jesus,  
the Father, and the Holy Spirit  
would be central to every les-  
son, activity, and experience.

One by one, we Baptists will  
begin to rally together to  
demand that individuals and  
families "reform." We must insist  
on righteous living, just as Rom.  
12:1-2 and 2 Cor. 6:14 require.

Baptists can impact the entire  
world and become the spiritual  
leader among denominations in  
the next millennium by  
demanding something from its  
members, teaching them what  
we stand for, and providing a  
clear, Christian identity for  
adults, teens, and youngsters.

I realize some of what I've  
said may seem radical at first  
glance, but remember that Lotz  
has asked us to "pray that a  
return to a 'radical reformation'  
will bring renewal to our dead  
and dying churches!"

Please verify and compare  
my thoughts with Scripture.  
God's perspective is opposite  
from ours. Pray that he will  
open your eyes to his view on  
the education of our children.

# New SS lesson writers to begin work on June 4

By Carl M. White  
Associate Editor

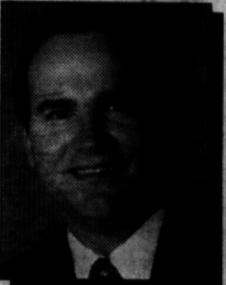
New Sunday School lesson writers have been named by The Baptist Record, beginning with the June 7 lesson published in the June 4 edition of the news journal.

Kevin Hand, pastor of First Church, Magee, will write the Life and Work series.

Nancie Simmons of Long Beach will write the Family Bible series.

William H. Sims III, pastor of First Church, Pontotoc, will write the Explore the Bible series.

All three writers will contribute



Hand

lessons for the June, July, and August quarter.

Hand has been pastor of First, Magee, since October 1995. He is a native of Kinder, La., a graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton, and New Orleans Seminary in New Orleans with master of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees.

Hand is married to the former Gina Allen of Heidelberg.

They have three children: Joshua, Heather, and Jessica.

Simmons teaches music to children in kindergarten through grade five at Harper



Simmons

McCaughan Elementary School in Long Beach. After school, she teaches private piano lessons.

A native of Amory, she attended Northeast Community College in Booneville and graduated with a music education and piano pedagogy degree from Mississippi State University in Starkville.

She is married to Jeff Simmons and they are members of First Church, Gulfport.

Sims has been pastor of First Church, Pontotoc, since 1992.

A native of Jackson, Tenn., Sims is a graduate of Union University in Jackson, Tenn.,

with a degree in religion and New Orleans Seminary in New Orleans with master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees.

He has pastored churches in Tennessee, Ohio, and Mississippi.

Sims is married to the former Nancy Elizabeth DeLoach.

They have two children, William Andrew (Drew) and Hannah Elizabeth.

## THE SECOND FRONT PAGE



PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

MAY 28, 1998

VOL. 122

No. 17



## YouthLink 2000 registration set to begin

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — YouthLink 2000, a massive turn-of-the-millennium student celebration, promises to provide the kind of challenge today's Christian young people need to impact their world for Christ, according to several youth leaders organizing the event.

"All this generation of students is looking for someone to point them in the right direction, to say, 'There is the hill: Go take it,'" said Keith Loomis, a student volunteer mobilization associate with the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in Atlanta, who serves on the YouthLink 2000 steering committee.

The Southern Baptist event will be held Dec. 29-31, 1999, simultaneously in seven U.S. cities:

- Atlanta, Ga.
- Anaheim, Calif.
- Denver, Colo.
- Houston, Texas.
- Philadelphia, Pa.
- St. Louis Mo.
- Tampa, Fla.

It will be devoted to celebration and praise, as well as commitment to evangelism and discipleship in the new millennium. As many as 200,000 students ages 13-22 are anticipated.

Loomis and Andy Morris, director of NAMB student volunteer mobilization, say they have already seen the spiritual intensity and maturity demonstrated by today's students in the response to World Changers, a program offering hands-on missions opportunities for junior high and high school students.

Morris saw World Changers explode from 137 volunteers in 1990 doing renovation of substandard homes in Briceville, Tenn., to more than 10,000 students working last summer in 40 citywide projects.

Morris also cited the commitment of hundreds of thousands of students to the True Love Waits sexual abstinence pledge and the high turnout for the yearly "See You At the Pole" prayer rallies on school campuses as further evidence of the movement of God among today's youth.

"God may be building an army of Christians," he said. "It is phenomenal to watch."

Among the challenges expected at YouthLink 2000 is to be involved in mis-

sions for a summer or a semester before college graduation.

Richard Ross, youth ministry consultant for the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, and Dean Finley, a student evangelism associate for NAMB, are co-chairs for the event.

"There are signs of a fresh movement of God among this generation," said Ross.

"If God should choose to place teenagers in the forefront of spreading revival and even spiritual awakening, it is interesting to wonder how the timing of YouthLink 2000 fits in his plans," he pointed out.

While the event promises plenty of fun and excitement, organizers said they are praying for several key dimensions of commitment among participants:

- ◆ More than 3,000 teenagers will profess faith in Christ as Savior and Lord;

- ◆ God will call out more than 1,000 career missionaries and 1,500 young pastors and church leaders;

- ◆ Most of those present will accept a challenge to share the gospel with every other American teenager by the end of AD 2000;

- ◆ Most will adopt a lifestyle of missions support through prayer and giving; and

- ◆ YouthLink 2000 will give young people a glimpse of the scope and scale of Southern Baptist work that they will carry with them the rest of their lives.

Southern Baptist sponsors of YouthLink 2000 are the BSSB, the NAMB, the International Mission Board and Woman's Missionary Union.

Coordinators are encouraging churches to register their students ages 13-22 early because space is limited. Registration is at more than 13,500 as of mid-May 1998.

"Venue choice and priority seating are on a first-come, first-served basis," said Doyle Pennington, project coordinator

for the event. "When venues fill up, we will close registration."

To encourage early registration, YouthLink 2000 coordinators are asking for a non-refundable deposit of \$10 per person up to Dec. 31, 1998, with the balance of \$50 due Jan. 31, 1999.

For those who took advantage of last year's partial registration special of \$5, the deadline for payment of the \$55 balance also has been extended to Jan. 31, 1999.

For a registration form, download a registration form from their Internet website at [www.youthlink2000.org](http://www.youthlink2000.org) or call (888) YOUTH.LK.

## Deadline is nearing for MBCB exec. secretary nominations

Since being elected as executive secretary of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), Bill Causey has led, worked with, and challenged Mississippi Baptists in carrying out our mission of bringing Mississippi and the world to Jesus.

As you know, Dr. Causey has announced his retirement effective September 30, 1998.

You have given the MBCB executive committee the responsibility of submitting to you a nominee for your election as executive secretary.

We believe that God has invited us to work with him to recommend the person he has chosen for this position.

The assignment will require faith and action. If we will obey God, his will shall be accomplished. Would you please pray daily for each member of the executive committee?

You are invited to submit to us, in writing, the name, address, and telephone number of any person you feel would be qualified to serve as executive secretary.

Please send the letter to the address listed below.

The executive committee will contact, by letter, each person you nominate and they will be asked to submit a resume to the executive committee.

June 4, 1998, has been set as the cutoff date for receiving nominations. June 18, 1998, has been set as the cutoff date for nominees to submit their resumes.



Upchurch

Robert K. Upchurch  
Chairman  
MBCB Executive Committee  
P.O. Drawer 409  
Tupelo, MS 38802

# Nashville pastor discusses 'seeker' issue

By Carl M. White  
Associate Editor

"If you want to get serious about preaching to the contemporary mind, you might want to have one-point sermons," said Frank Lewis, pastor of First Church, Nashville, at the Preaching and Worship Conference held at Crossgates Church, Brandon, on May 11-12.

Lewis, pastor of the historic downtown Nashville church, was careful to draw a distinction between worship and a seeker-sensitive service.



**PREACHING & WORSHIPING TOGETHER** — Matt Buckles (left), consultant in the MBCB Church Administration/Pastoral Ministries Department, and Chuck Pourciau (second from left), pastor of First Church, Louisville, greet Frank Lewis (second from right), pastor of First Church, Nashville, at the May 11-12 Preaching and Worship Conference at Crossgates Church, Brandon. Joining the trio is Perry Sanders, pastor of First Church, Lafayette, La. (Photo by Carl M. White)

"In a seeker-sensitive church, worship and evangelism need to be seen as distinctly different activities," Lewis said.

"It is my conviction that seekers can't worship. They can observe Christians worshipping."

He defined a seeker-sensitive service as an intentional strategy for aggressive evangelism.

"A seeker service is when contemporary Christians model the claims of the gospel for the unchurched, non-Christian individuals in attendance. It is a form of mass evangelism for today," Lewis said.

Lewis warned that while many pastors are eager to try a seeker-sensitive service, most churches are not ready for it.

"Before you can try a seeker service, you've got to give careful attention to the mission statement of your congregation," he said.

"If you don't have a mission statement, then your mission statement probably is to just exist, or keep people happy, or keep things going as they are."

"It helps if the church can see that the move to start a seeker service as an extension of the church's mission statement," Lewis said.

He identified several elements of a seeker-sensitive service:

- ◆ It is based on the assumption that an unchurched, non-Christian audience is seeking something to make sense of their lives.

- ◆ It is unique to the experiences and needs of a narrow target audience.

"We can model the claims of the gospel for many different target audiences. A seeker-sensitive service is one. Baby Boomers have one set of needs, while Generation Xers have another.

"There is a church in Nashville that has a cowboy church. It is not for everyone," he said.

- ◆ It is sensory driven, using many different elements from video to drama, and contemporary, non-traditional music.

- ◆ The sermon length is shorter and

sequence varies.

- ◆ It uses seeker-sensitive language and avoids indoctrination or arguing about doctrines.

Before embarking upon developing a seeker sensitive approach, Lewis said, a pastor must ask himself several questions — "Am I doing this to be trendy, because of personal preference, or in order to get my share of the market? Or am I doing this to fulfill the Great Commission?"

He also offered a warning. "Whatever you do to reach people, you've got to continue to do to keep people. If you start a seeker-sensitive service in your church, it is not going to make everybody happy."

Lewis was one of six conference leaders who provided worship experiences and in-depth workshops on Bible preaching and worship preparation. Other leaders were:

- Argile Smith, professor of preaching at New Orleans Seminary.

- Perry Sanders, longtime pastor of First Church, Lafayette, La.

- Chuck Pourciau and Tony Higginbotham, pastor and minister of music, respectively, of First Church, Louisville.

- Dot Pray, keyboard consultant for the Music Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB).

The annual conference is sponsored by the MBCB Church Administration-Pastoral Ministries Department.

Next year's preaching and worship conference will be held May 10-11 at Temple Church, Hattiesburg.

For more information, contact Julius Thompson, director of the MBCB Church Administration-Pastoral Ministries Department, at P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone (601) 968-3800, or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.

## Salt Lake City 'Crossover' Hispanic crusade set

**SALT LAKE CITY (BP)** — An area-wide crusade for Hispanics planned for June 12-14 in Salt Lake City will be an integral part of Southern Baptists' Crossover Salt Lake City evangelistic effort. Organizers anticipate crowds of more than 10,000 on the final

evening in the 12,000-seat Franklin Quest Field.

"We don't have that many Hispanic churches in Salt Lake City, and out of this we're hoping to establish several," said William Ortega, a catalytic missionary for Hispanics serving with the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention and the North American Mission Board.

"We've already got places picked out where we are going to establish Bible studies. If it goes like we think it's going to go, there are going to be a lot of new opportunities to start more Hispanic missions."

The crusade, with a theme of "Jesus Christ for Everyone," is the first major evangelistic event ever held in the city for Hispanics, Ortega said.

The key drawing card is the hugely popular Mexican pop singer Yuri, who about two years ago committed her life to Christ.

During the first two nights of the crusade, to be held in a 3,000-seat auditorium at Skyline High School in Salt Lake City, she will perform for about 30 minutes before a message by Ortega.

The final night, in the baseball stadium, she will perform an entire concert and share her

testimony, Ortega said.

"We expect to fill that stadium," Ortega said. "We are planning to invite the Mexican consul and the mayor for the city to be there."

The crusade will be the culmination of a week-long Crossover effort for Hispanics and other language congregations in Salt Lake City that begins June 5 and continues through the June 9-11 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

Part of the overall Crossover effort, the Hispanic projects include block parties, sports clinics, and other evangelistic activities.

Ortega said there are about 200,000 Hispanics among more than 1.5 million residents of the Wasatch Front, a section of northern Utah running from Provo in the south through the Salt Lake Valley to north of Ogden.

Like the rest of the region, the Hispanic community has come under considerable influence of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) (the Mormons), Ortega said.

Hispanic immigrants often are embraced with comprehensive immigration and resettlement assistance if they join the

LDS church, according to Herman Rios, director of language evangelism for the Florida Baptist Convention and a member of the national task force coordinating Crossover.

"The Mormons may lose the first-generation (Hispanic) adults," Rios said, "but they have access to their children."

Taking the lead in the crusade and other Crossover efforts are 12 church-sponsored Hispanic missions in Utah and four in Idaho that are a part of the regional convention, although they will be assisted by other volunteers from around the country.

Preparation among the language churches has been intense, Ortega said, beginning with a 100-day period of prayer on Feb. 26.

In a 40-day period of fasting that began April 26, individuals were asked to fast one meal a day, one day a week, several days a week or however they felt led to participate.

In addition to the two or three new Hispanic churches, Ortega said organizers hope the crusade will strengthen and ignite a growing passion for evangelism among all Hispanic churches and contribute to spiritual awakening in Utah and Idaho.

## MBCB garners awards

Farrell Blankenship, director of broadcast services at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), and Tim Nicholas, MBCB communication director, won four awards in the Baptist Communicators Association (BCA) Wilmer C. Fields competition at the recent BCA annual meeting in San Antonio.

Blankenship and Nicholas, members of the national association of Southern Baptist professional communicators, won first and second place awards in video commercials/public service announcements with two of the four MBCB 30-second television spots produced last year for distribution across the state.

They won first prize for "Through the Ages," a piece that pointed out God is there to listen whenever we want to talk with him. Second place was "Flat Tire," which showed that God changes people — both their attitudes and behavior.

Blankenship and Nicholas also won first prize for three radio spots produced last year and second prize for Vessels, the board's 30-minute video magazine. First prize in that category went to Florida's video magazine.

Blankenship and Nicholas did their work on the projects as part of the communications strategy of the MBCB Church Information Support Team.

The BCA competition is named for Wilmer C. Fields, former editor of The Baptist Record (1956-59) and former public relations director for the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee in Nashville.

# N.C. paper fires minister to homosexuals

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP) — When Tim Wilkins urged the 1997 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) to promote healing for homosexuals, he didn't know it would cost him his job.

Formerly employed by the Raleigh (N.C.) News & Observer, Wilkins was fired after a front-page article about the motion and CROSS, an ex-gay ministry he founded, appeared in the newspaper.

After its publication last August, Wilkins said he faced hostility from superiors in the circulation department.

Later that month, he was suspended for three days and then fired.

The day The News & Observer article appeared last year, Wilkins learned it may have upset his employer. A co-worker told him his name had been discussed in a meeting and a question raised of whether the story would adversely affect circulation.

The article proved controversial, generating more than a dozen letters (pro and con) to the editor. It included an extensive discussion of his background and the formation of CROSS (CREATED for the Opposite Sex) Ministries. Wilkins and his wife, Lisa, organized it two years ago to reach out to homosexuals.

His concern for homosexuals stems from his own experience. Although baptized at age 9 in an SBC church, in his teens confusion over his identity and

sexuality led to a series of sexual encounters with men.

Wilkins stopped after realizing homosexuality was incompatible with biblical teachings, he said, but it wasn't until his early 30s — after a decade of celibacy and prayer — that he felt desire for women. He and Lisa were married in 1992 after meeting at a Christian singles seminar.

At the 1997 SBC annual meeting, Wilkins moved that the North American Mission Board (NAMB) contact a reputable ex-gay ministry to learn about resources for ministering to those affected by homosexuality.

The motion also called on the NAMB to promote these resources to all agencies, state conventions, and local churches as part of a campaign to promote healing for homosexuals.

Martin King, public relations director for the board, said trustees had taken action on the motion. They will release their report at the upcoming SBC annual meeting, June 9-11 in Salt Lake City.

Regardless of the outcome of his case, Wilkins said he hopes Christians will recognize the harm caused by homosexuality and let homosexuals know that God can change them.

"Unfortunately, there is a taboo and stigma associated with this sin," he said. "Yet, to tell the homosexual all he needs to do is repent is as ludicrous as telling someone who suffers from anorexia nervosa all she needs to do is eat."

"True, repentance is essential to change, but many underlying issues regarding homosexuality need to be addressed."

Baptist Press, news service of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, contacted The News & Observer's publisher twice for a comment on the case, but he did not return phone calls.

## Fla. governor vetoes pro-life license tags

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (ABP) — Florida Gov. Lawton Chiles has vetoed a controversial "Choose Life" license tag approved earlier by the state legislature.

Supporters argued the license plate was intended to promote adoption, but opponents termed it a political message against abortion.

"Simply because a particular political message is able to garner a majority of votes in the Florida Legislature does not mean that an official state of Florida license plate is the proper forum on this — or any other — political issue," Chiles said in his veto message.

Chiles also vetoed a \$50 tax rebate to homeowners, saying it would discriminate against renters.

## Homosexuals planning \$2-bill 'buyout'

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Seeking to mount a counteroffensive to the boycott of The Disney Company by religious groups displeased with the company's "anti-family" and "anti-Christian" drift, leaders in the homosexual community have announced plans for a nationwide "buyout" targeting Florida's Walt Disney World and Disney stores nationwide June 6.

Calling the campaign, "Stand Our Ground," the official Internet site of the Disney Gay Day event urges homosexuals to purchase Disney merchandise to demonstrate their support for Disney's stand against "the reprehensible behavior" of organizations targeting the entertainment giant.

Participants in the "buyout" are urged to make their purchases using \$2 bills so that "at the end of the day, the Walt Disney Company will be directly counting your support." The Internet site calls the \$2 bill "the closest thing to gay money ever produced by the Federal Reserve."

The homosexual group said it is important

for Disney to know who is supporting them, criticizing Disney's vocal foes for trying to "intrude on our right as gay men and lesbians to enjoy the same rights and privileges they would hold for themselves exclusively."

The Internet site notes Disney's "family friendly policies are good for business." The corporation's decision to extend health benefits to the domestic partners of homosexual employees was a key factor in the decision by messengers to the 1997 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Dallas and many other conservative groups to call for economic action against Disney.

When messengers to last year's SBC annual meeting approved the resolution calling for punitive economic action against Disney and other companies that "promote immoral ideologies," homosexual advocacy groups responded by buying Disney-themed toys and donating them to hospitals and other children's organizations.

## Most Va. trustees affiliated with new convention

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Most trustees from Virginia serving on the boards of Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) agencies will be members of a conservative state convention started two years ago, if a slate of nominees released in April is approved at the SBC annual meeting in June.

Every Virginian on a report released last month by the SBC committee on nominations is a member of a congregation exclusively aligned with the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV).

In addition, six Virginians named to committees by SBC President Tom Elliff also maintain membership in SBCV congregations.

The SBCV separated from the Baptist General Association of Virginia in 1996,

charging the 175-year-old BGAV is theologically liberal and is weakening its ties to the SBC. BGAV leaders deny both charges.

The report from the SBC committee on nominations is likely to be approved at the denomination's June meeting.

When the new Virginia trustees are added to those already serving, SBCV members will represent 54% of Virginia's trustees. Another 25% will come from churches affiliated only with the BGAV, while 21% will be members of churches that are "dually aligned," affiliating with both the BGAV and the SBCV.

T. C. Pinckney, a retired air force general who is one of Virginia's two representatives on the SBC committee on nominations, noted almost all Virginia trustees were

appointed to their four- or five-year terms prior to 1996 when the SBCV organized as a state convention, and were members of churches then affiliated with BGAV.

He stressed that most of this year's Virginia nominees were trustees eligible for a second term. The nominations committee named only two new trustees from Virginia to fill vacant spots.

Nevertheless, BGAV leaders expressed dismay at the growing imbalance in the General Association's representation on Southern Baptist Convention boards.

"This latest list of nominees confirms the ongoing discrimination and prejudice against loyal Virginia Baptists," said BGAV president Bill Wilson, pastor of First Church in Waynesboro, Va.

"These nominations have become political prizes distributed by an inner group to those who have led in the effort to destroy the BGAV," he said.

BGAV Executive Director Reginald McDonough said he was "disappointed" by the nominee slate.

"I know that a formula for dividing trustee positions among BGAV and SBCV churches would be unworkable, but given the comparative support of Southern Baptist Convention ministries by the two Virginia conventions, I would expect some members of BGAV churches would have an opportunity to serve in these significant areas of responsibility," he said.

During fiscal 1997, the 1,460 churches affiliated with BGAV gave more than \$9.5 million to SBC causes. During the same period, the SBCV's 150 congregations con-

## SBC sessions available on Internet

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — A new Internet web site, sponsored by the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), will be available to Southern Baptists June 1 and will host a live telecast of the Tuesday session of the Salt Lake City SBC annual meeting June 9-11.

The live telecast will be produced by the broadcast communications group of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and also will be available on NAMB's web site. The two web pages can be found at: [www.sbc.net](http://www.sbc.net) and [www.namb.net](http://www.namb.net).

The Tuesday (June 9) three sessions will also be rebroadcast at a later time to be announced.

The new SBC web site was developed by Landmark Community Interests, Inc., a N.C. Christian-based web site developer.

After the introductory "welcome" page at "sbc.net," the next page will be the Executive Committee home page where keys will direct the viewer to God's Eternal Plan of Salvation, Baptist Press, and SBC Life in text formats.

There also will be links to SBC entities and a wealth of information about the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministries around the world.

Various SBC e-mail addresses will also be available.

## Pair will vie for Pastors' Conf. post

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Two pastors will be nominated for president of the annual Pastors' Conference prior to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Salt Lake City in June.

Mike Hamlet, pastor of First Church, North Spartanburg, S.C., will be nominated for president while Jerry Sutton, pastor of Two Rivers Church, Nashville, told Baptist Press he has been asked to be nominated and it is likely he will consent.

The Pastors' Conference is held the Sunday and Monday before the start of the SBC annual meeting June 9-11.

Like the SBC annual meeting, the Pastors' Conference will be held at the Salt Palace Convention Center in downtown Salt Lake City.

## BAPTIST COLLEGE NEWS



**Student Government Association officers** were recently elected by the Mississippi College student body to serve during the 1998-99 school year. The new officers, inducted during Chapel ceremonies held on campus, are (from left) Brandon Jones of Pascagoula, president; Dade Dowdle of Columbus, vice-president; Ricky Jenkins of Pearl, chief justice; Sara Rogers of Brookhaven, secretary; Thad Burkhalter of Indianola, treasurer; Lance Martin of Sontag, Men's Affairs Board chairman; and Lauren Stanford of Tupelo, Women's Affairs Board chairman. Not pictured is Evan Lenow of Memphis, Tenn., attorney.

**Classes to be offered** by the Office of Continuing Education at Mississippi College this summer are Creative Writing, June 4-July 2; Woodcarving, July 9-Aug. 6; Introduction to WordPerfect 6.1, July 6-27; and Introduction to Photography, July 13-Aug. 10. For more information, call (601) 925-3263.



**Mississippi College (MC) senior Laura Michelle Edwards** was recently named as the first recipient of the Sam and Wilda Williams Endowed Music Education Scholarship awarded by the MC Department of Music. Edwards, daughter of Larry and Vicki Edwards of Jackson, is a member of Briarwood Drive Church. Pictured with Edwards is Howell W. Todd, president of MC.



**Ashley Fitzhugh and Jason Coker** (left to right) received awards during the annual Honors Day ceremony held recently at William Carey College. Fitzhugh, a business administration major from Pine Grove, La., was presented the Outstanding Baptist Student Union (BSU) Councilman Award. Coker, of New Augusta, received the BSU President's Award.

**Dates for the 16th Annual William Carey College Basketball Camps** have been announced. Four separate camps will be offered and will take place at Clinton Gymnasium on the Hattiesburg campus.

Specialized Shooting Camp I (for boys and girls) — June 29-July 1; 9 a.m.-noon, daily; cost \$50.

Shooting Camp II (for boys and girls) — July 6-8; 1-4 p.m., daily; cost \$50.

Traditional Weekly Session (for boys ages 7-18) — July 27-31. Campers will be divided according to age, skill level and overall athletic ability. The week-long camp will offer individualized instruction in all phases of basketball, with emphasis on fundamentals. Daily sessions will include basketball drills, shooting sessions, offensive and defensive group work, and scrimmage games. Cost for day

camp (9 a.m.-4 p.m.) is \$150 (includes noon meal). Cost for dorm camp (24 hours) is \$225 (includes 3 meals daily).

Post Man Camp — Aug. 3-5; 1-4 p.m., daily; cost \$50.

All fees include camp T-shirt and insurance. Reservations may be obtained by making a

\$25 (non-refundable) deposit. For more information, contact the WCC Basketball Office at (601) 582-6111, or Coach Steve Knight at (601) 582-6415. Written correspondence can be sent to Coach Knight at WCC, 498 Tuscan Ave., Hattiesburg, MS 39401-5499.



**During the annual Honors Day ceremony** held recently at William Carey College (WCC), Brian Lucas, Student Government Association (SGA) president, and Laura Ann Dowdle, SGA vice-president, presented the Outstanding Faculty Award to **Thomas Lott**, professor of modern language and literature. The award is voted on by the WCC student body. Pictured (from left) are Dowdle, Lott, and Lucas.

## HOOMEOMINGS

**Heucks Retreat, Brookhaven:** May 31; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by lunch in fellowship hall; afternoon activities will consist of a memorial service, special cemetery offering, and gospel singing; Greg Potts, former pastor, guest speaker; Ken Kirk, pastor.

**Friendship, Grenada:** May 30, 7 p.m. Hamburger supper followed by Lanny Moody, humorist, and testimonies from former staff and members. Guy Hughes is pastor.

**West Shady Grove (Wayne):** June 7; Stephen C. Smith, pastor; for more information call (601) 735-3564 or 735-4152.

**Arlington (Lincoln):** May 31; worship service, 11 a.m.; covered dish meal, noon. David Waits, former pastor, Bailey, guest speaker; Bert Sasser Jr., Macon, music; Bob Lynch, interim pastor.

**Rock Hill, Brandon:** May 31; 11 a.m.; covered dish meal in fellowship hall after service; R. C. Rice, Star, guest speaker; Timothy O. Canterbury, pastor.

**Calvary of Pricedale (Pike):** June 7; services at 10 a.m.; afternoon service with special music by New Wine; Marie Carraway and Daniel Carraway, wife and son of the late Richard Carraway, former pastor, guest speakers; Harold Gartman, pastor.

**Souenlovie (Clarke):** May 31; Good News Singers, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; lunch will be served; Parker Chancellor, former pastor, guest speaker.

**Interstate (Shaw):** June 7; 11 a.m.; noon meal; afternoon singing; Frank Bishop, guest speaker; Hiram Eaves, music; Robert Haney, pastor.

**Falkner (Tippah):** June 14; 11 a.m.; fellowship meal at 12:45 p.m.; afternoon singing; Mike Bridges, guest speaker; Stanley Huddleston, pastor.

**Liberty, Jefferson Community (Carroll):** June 7; 10:45 a.m.; fellowship meal; afternoon singing; Keith Powell, former pastor, Baton Rouge, La., guest speaker; Riley Ainsworth, pastor.

## REVIVAL DATES

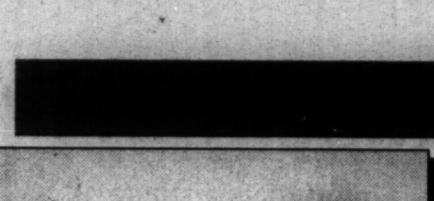
**Juniper Grove, Poplarville:** June 7-10; Experience God Revival; Don Ball, Woolmarket Church, leader; Ray Spence, pastor.

**Rock Branch, Union:** June 7-13; Sun., 5:30 p.m.; Mon.-Fri., 7:30 p.m.; Joey Lang, evangelist; Marjorie Arnold, music.

**Poplar Flat (Winston):** Marvelous Monday Night Revival Services; 7 p.m.; Grady Crowell, director of missions, Clark County; Arlis Nichols, retired pastor, Enterprise; Paul Blanchard, director of missions, Winston County; Danny Bryant, director of missions, Chickasaw County, evangelists; James Gayle Pope, pastor.

## Revival results

**Attala Association:** May 4-6; senior adults; services were held at Second Church, Kosciusko, Monday; Williamsville Church, Tuesday; and First Church, Kosciusko, Wednesday.



# EBC marks 'lifetime' anniversary in 1998

WIESBADEN, Germany (BP) — In countries where church buildings have been around longer than the United States, 40 years seems insignificant. However, for the European Baptist Convention, 40 years equals its lifetime.

Begun in 1958, the European Baptist Convention (EBC) is now composed of 69 English-speaking churches in 22 countries in Europe and the Middle East.

Special activities to mark the convention's 40th anniversary are being planned. Interlaken '98, an annual assembly held in Interlaken, Switzerland (similar to Ridge-

crest and Glorieta events), will feature a special anniversary celebration night during the week of July 4-9. Another, larger celebration will be held during the convention's annual meeting in Stavanger, Norway, Oct. 28-29.

Today the convention, with 4,500 members, covers a geographical territory larger than the U.S. Geographic boundaries of the convention include Stavanger, Norway; Rota, Spain; Athens; Moscow; the Azores, Portugal; and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. People from more than 100 nations participate in the life of EBC churches.

At its annual meeting in October 1991, the EBC set a goal to plant 20 new English-language churches during the next four years. That goal was reached. However, at the same time, the EBC saw the closing of many churches as the U.S. military began its drawdown and closing of many military bases. Through the years the churches have evolved to reflect the makeup of the international communities to which they now minister.

For more information about the convention, its ministries or its anniversary celebrations, contact the EBC office at Holzstrasse 11b, 65199 Wiesbaden, Germany; telephone: 011-49-611-941-0505; e-mail: [ebc@compuserve.com](mailto:ebc@compuserve.com).

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Twenty one students at Delta State University, Cleveland, and the Baptist Student Union (BSU) director, Bill Kirkpatrick, traveled to Colorado Springs, Colo., to work with the BSU at the Air Force Academy. The students led the weekly BSU meeting at the Eagles Nest (Baptist Student Center) and in a meeting at the Academy in a lecture hall. In addition to leading in the two meetings, the students painted, ripped up carpet, framed and sheet rocked a wall, repaired a flat roof, and did a number of outside projects.

Those who participated were: Tamara Canty, Mary Ann Davis, Kelly Dean, Heather Duke, Becky Ellis, Tom Edwards, Karen Eure, Dan Hendon, Jay Jolly, Robert Jensen, Bill Kirkpatrick, Allen Lee, Mickey Makamson, Joey McBride, Paul McCarley, Chad McKnight, Courtney Morgan, Jana Rayborn, Lindsay Slay, Kellie Steiger, Angelia Turner, and Kari Willis.



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### VBS dates

**Antioch, Columbus:** June 8-12; 9-11:30 a.m.; 4 year old-6th grade; Edward N. Knox, pastor.

**Sebastopol, Sebastopol:** June 1-5; 8:30-11:30 a.m.; ages 5 through youth.

**Arlington, Bogue Chitto:** June 1-5; 8:30-11:30 a.m.; Bob Lynch, interim pastor.

**Juniper Grove (Pearl River):** June 22-26; Nelda Mills, principal; Ray Spence, pastor.

**Osyka Church, Osyka,** held its annual recognition service on May 3 for Mission Friends, GAs, RAs, and Acteens. A reception was given in honor of the children and their parents. Missions Friends (front row) are Tyler Cutrer, Heidi Ott, Mitchell Aucoin, (back row) Adam Figura, Major Gill, Chet Wilson, and Sierra Wall. Teacher for Mission Friends is Stacee Ott.

GAs, (front row) are Hailey Ott, Megan Gill, Jessie Travis, Shelbie Travis, Kaitlin Wilbanks, (back row) Abigail Wall, Katie Cutrer, Jessica

Figura, Hanna Ott, and Kayla Cutrer. Kim Wall and Suzanne Cutrer are teachers for GAs.

RAs, (front row) Joshua Aucoin, (back row) Luke Rhodus, Ron Wilson, and Wesley Travis. Teacher for RAs is Beverly Wilbanks.

Acteens, (front row) Angela Terrell, Crystal Ott, Sharon Wall, (back row) Colleen Strickland, Holly Ott, Karen Wall, Susanna Adams, Rani Cutrer, and Abigail Wall. Colleen Strickland is the teacher for Acteens. Pete Wilbanks is pastor.



Osyka Church GAs



Osyka Church RAs



Osyka Church Mission Friends



Osyka Church Acteens

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**Tate Church, Corinth,** has called **Richard Johnson** as pastor. A native of Bartlett, Johnson is a graduate of Creighton College, Memphis, Luther Rice Seminary and Southern Seminary, both in Jacksonville, Fla. He previously served at Parkview Church, Greenville.



Johnson

**Heucks Retreat Church, Brookhaven,** has called **Jason Meaux** as interim minister to students. He is a junior at

William Carey College. His previous place of service was Petal Harvey Church, Petal.

**H. Cliff Davis**, former home missionary and state missions director in West Virginia, will retire as pastor of Lighthouse Church, Richland, effective May 31. Davis is available for supply and interim pastorates. He may be reached at 608 Heatherview Drive, Brandon, MS 39042 or call (601) 829-2877.

**Woodhaven Church, Ocean Springs,** has called **Sam Johnson**, a native of Jackson County, as pastor effective April 12. He is currently attending New Orleans Seminary. Johnson previously served as minister of evangelism and youth at Solid Rock Church in

Covington, Ga.

**Springdale Church, Attala Association,** has called **Mark Wicker** of Amite County as pastor. His previous place of service was New Zion Church, Liberty. Wicker is a graduate of New Orleans Seminary. His father Thomas Wicker, also serving a church in Attala Association, is pastor of Sallis Church.

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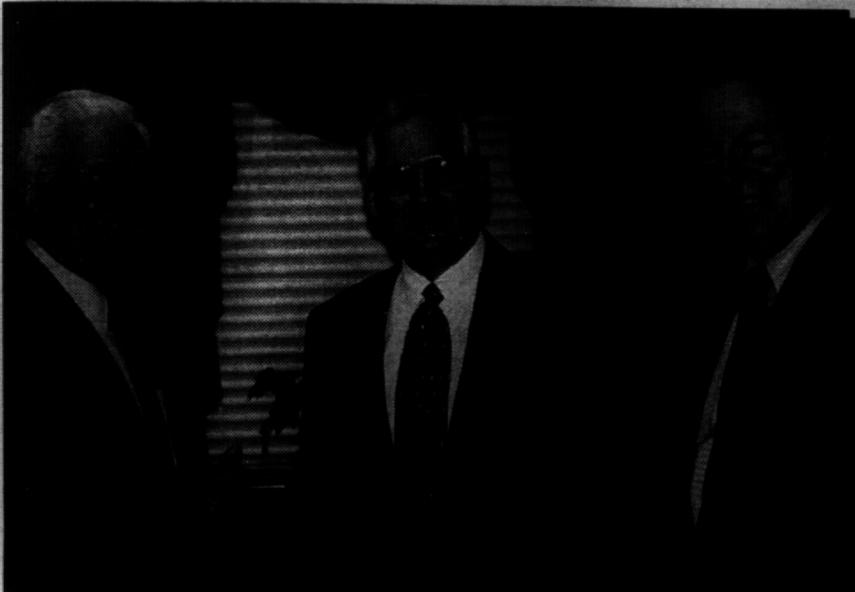
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## JUST FOR THE RECORD

**A Retirement Reception** will be held at South Side Church, Meridian, for Wayne E. Riley, pastor, and his wife, Glenda, organist. The reception will be held May 31 at 8 p.m. in fellowship hall.

**Friendship Church, Grenada**, is planning the dedication of their new 700 seat auditorium to be held in the morning service May 31 at 10:30 a.m. Guy Hughes is pastor.



**Anthony S. Kay** was honored by First Church, Calhoun City, on April 5, for his 20th anniversary as pastor of the church. Special music was presented by his daughter and son-in-law, Kathy and John Langworthy of Clinton. Pictured with Kay are John Flowers (left), retired pastor, First Church, Senatobia, and Roy Wilson (right), pastor, Bethel Church, Coldwater. Following the service, a church-wide dinner was held in honor of Kay in the fellowship hall.

## NINTH ANNUAL MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE MINISTERS GOLF TOURNAMENT

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**Participants in Bible Drills** at Friendship East Church, Charleston, (pictured, from left) were Lauren Lindley, church; Kalen Lindley, state; Tista Wilkinson, state; Brandie Stiles, state; and Dyan Willis, state. Not pictured are Jay Wilkinson and Leah Ivy, church.



**Hebron Church, Panola Association**, honored its senior adults. A luncheon was held following the morning service on May 3. Special honor was given to the four members of the church who were eighty or older. Pictured (from left) are Dorothy Turpin, Martha Hill, Ruby Haynes, wife of J. R. Haynes, and Mena Scallorn.

## Prayerwalks planned at SBC

SALT LAKE CITY (BP) — Messengers and guests to this year's Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting and related gatherings will have two opportunities to participate in prayerwalking events. The events will be held June 5 and 7.

The June 5 prayerwalk is an all-day event. Participants will gather at 9 a.m. at the Salt Palace Convention Center in the SBC Prayer Room, which will be in the Green Room on Level 1 adjacent to the ballrooms.

The second event will be held the morning of June 7. This event is sponsored by the Baptist Nursing Fellowship (BNF) and is held in conjunction with the Woman's Missionary Union annual meeting.

The prayerwalk will convene at 9 a.m. in the lobby of the Doubletree Hotel, 255 South West Temple. The prayerwalk will conclude at noon. Reservations are required and may be made by calling (800) 968-7301.

Prior to the prayerwalk, BNF will host a breakfast for medical health professionals and other interested individuals. The breakfast begins at 8 a.m. at the Doubletree Hotel. Reservations are required. The cost is \$12. Send check, payable to WMU Annual Meeting 1998, P.O. Box 830010, Birmingham, AL 35283-0010.

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2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (*I repent.*)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (*I believe in Jesus.*)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him. (*I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.*)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for

# BWA helping Liberians focus evangelism

MONROVIA, Liberia (BP) — A 10-member Baptist World Alliance (BWA) team who held an evangelism and leadership conference in Monrovia, Liberia, April 13-

22 met believers who survived the fires of war through a strong faith in God and who see nationwide evangelism, economic development, and education as keys to

rebuilding their country.

They also are depending on the global Baptist community for help.

The BWA team of pastors, a businessman, and BWA staff was warmly received, not only because of the expertise they brought for the evangelism and leadership conference, but even more for their presence when things are still far from settled in Liberia.

"You did not just send relief, you came," said Augustine Yeager, director of evangelism for the Liberia Baptist Missionary and Education Convention, Inc. (LBMEC).

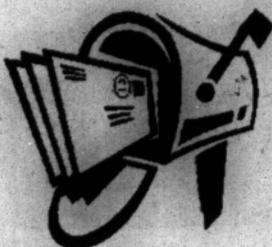
Two years before, team members and Liberian leaders were severely disappointed when renewed fighting in Liberia prevented the visit, but Moses Roulac, LBMEC president, told the team they had come "in the fullness of time."

Monrovia's Effort Baptist Church was packed to capacity and overflowing with more than 250 people for the conference.

LBMEC leaders had specifically requested an evangelism conference, which they opened to Pentecostals, Methodists, Lutherans, and others, out of a belief that Jesus Christ is the answer for a new Liberia, and that they had not done enough in evangelism before.

"The lifeblood of any church is evangelism," Roulac said. "It is the only hope for Liberia."

Baptist World Aid has already given more than \$71,000 for the Liberian relief effort.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

### THE DIVORCE QUESTION

Editor:

In the May 17 issue of The Baptist Record, Grace Graham's Family Bible Series Sunday School lesson posed the question, "What about Divorce?"

I was disappointed with the article as she veered from the question to deal with marriage. This would have been an excellent time to answer the question she posed.

I agree with her 'high standard' of marriage, and we must promote marriage as God intended it: one man-one woman for a lifetime.

However, with the divorce rate in our churches rivaling the rate among non-Christians, we must answer her question and not avoid it.

For too long now, we have neglected divorcees or treated them as "second-class Christians."

When Jesus died on the Cross for our sins, it included the sin of divorce.

Our churches must not condone divorce, but we must not condemn divorcees either.

The admonition in Scripture to not tear apart what God has joined together must also be understood with the admonition God gave to Peter in Acts 10.

When God has made something or someone clean (1 John 1:9) then who are we to call them unclean or unholy?

Divorce is sin, but let us remember that we

are all sinners saved by the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Johnny Bley, pastor  
North McComb Church, McComb

### USE WORDS WITH CARE

Editor:

I am writing in response to Dr. Richard Land's remarks about the Disney boycott.

He stated that the boycott would continue and that "It's not one hydrogen bomb. It's a steady month-by-month artillery barrage."

My comments are directed more toward his use of military metaphor rather than the boycott itself.

It troubles me that we have resorted to using this sort of language when expressing our opposition to other institutions.

There is enough violence in society without having a "hydrogen bomb" and "artillery barrages" associated with Southern Baptists. India recently tested a nuclear weapon and we all know about the increasing number of school related shootings.

I think we need to be more careful in the language we use to portray our ideals.

After all, words are how we communicate the gospel to our world.

I pray that we can take a firm stand with for our beliefs without letting our anger get the best of us.

Daniel L. Chisholm, pastor  
Calvary Church, Bogue Chitto

## IMB lists personnel needs for 'visionary' So. Baptists

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — The International Mission Board's (IMB) latest list of the 50 most urgently needed new missionaries is filled with opportunities to challenge even the most visionary Southern Baptists. Included are:

• Strategy coordinator. Devising a strategy to take the gospel to a people group that has never heard the good news of God's love. Coordinating resources to start a church planting movement. Mentoring others to multiply the vision of starting many new churches.

• Creative access. Using professional skills to contribute to a country closed to a traditional missionary presence. Developing relationships and sharing the good news of salvation with those God is drawing to himself.

• Church planting and evangelism. Partnering with national Baptists to develop a plan to start new churches. Training believers to be self-reproducing disciples.

Russian Baptists, who worry that religious freedom is waning in their country, have requested 121 missionaries to help them. Many needs in "harvest fields," countries like Brazil, Uruguay, Suriname, Mexico, and the Philippines, where people are responding to the gospel in large numbers.

• Agriculture and public health. Providing agricultural or animal science consultation while developing relationships and sharing the gospel. Teaching agriculture in a university while implementing programs to result in outreach opportunities. Developing public health ministries, including sanitation, nutrition and immunization, in an area where Christian witness and ministry is needed.

"Millions and millions of people in this world have never heard about salvation in Jesus Christ, and God calls us to do something about it," said Jim Riddell, associate director of the IMB's personnel selection department.

"The good news is that we can do something. All of us can pray that God would call people out to do the job. And many of us can look at the list of needs and say, 'You know, I could do that,'" Riddell said.

For information on specific requests for new missionaries, contact the IMB by sending an e-mail to [initial.contacts@imb.org](mailto:initial.contacts@imb.org) or calling toll-free (888) 422-6461.



## LifeAnswers

Ron Mumbower, Ph.D.  
Minister of Counseling  
First Church, Jackson

What should I do when I see a lay leader of our church drinking, cursing, and telling dirty jokes?

Follow the instructions in Matt. 18:15-19. Go to your Christian brother/sister and speak the truth in love. By displaying love and concern rather than judgement and condemnation, you may win your brother/sister over. If he/she chooses not listen, you are responsible for obeying the other scriptural mandates in these verses.

Your goal should be to enhance the Kingdom of God. Let your brother/sister know of your concern that lost people should see Christ in all we do, including our personal conduct when we're out in the world.

This person may look at you as if you are from another planet. Be patient and listen to how he/she responds. It is possible that you may be able to help this fellow believer shine for Christ. Take a stand. You will bring a depth to your Christian life — and possibly theirs — that has not been achieved before.

My son has been unable to break away from an abusive relationship that involves heavy alcohol use by both parties. How can I help?

You should first determine whether he wants your help. Remember the prodigal son? He had to come to his senses (Luke 15:17) before his father could help him. There are people who will consistently refuse help; they simply don't want to do what is necessary to confront their problem.

Be sure your actions are not excusing (enabling) this bad behavior. Don't beat yourself up with guilt, either. Take your burdens to the Father in prayer, and consult your pastor or a Christian counselor to better understand this well-documented condition. Love your son as God loves you. Encourage your son by pointing out his good behavior and not harping on bad behavior. You are not his conscience; allow the Holy Spirit and the power of prayer to bring about healing in his life.

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name is not required. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.

## FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

### What about the end of the world?

Mark 13



By Grace Graham

**Questions about the end (13:1-4).** Bible scholars do not agree upon the interpretation of Mark 13. The material seems to refer in part to the destruction of the temple and in part to Christ's return to establish his kingdom. Precisely what part refers to which event is not absolutely clear. However, the message of encouragement and challenge is to face the future with faithfulness and confidence.

The stones of the temple walls were truly wonderful. The eastern wall of the holy of holies was covered with gold.

They must have been surprised with Jesus' response to their admiration of the temple. He said that the stones of the temple walls would be thrown down. This was the center of worship for all of Israel. How could this possibly happen?

The question of Peter, James, John, and Andrew was, "when will this be, and what will be the sign when these things are all to be accomplished?" Our curiosity of the end times is not new.

**Warning about deception (13:5-7).** Jesus warned the disciples to take heed. He repeatedly used words meaning to be care-

ful and to be alert. He knew of the possibility of the disciples being misguided by false claims. Many would come claiming to be his representative. The first known messianic pretender was Bar Cochba (AD. 132).

How careful must we be today to measure the claims of appealing leaders? How do we prepare ourselves to discern what is truth from God and what is a false representation? Through the work of the Holy Spirit we must get to know God better by reading his word. Prayerfully seek God's wisdom as you learn what is truth.

**Prophecy about Christ's return (13:24-27).** Some people do not believe that Jesus is coming again. These verses assure us that he is not only coming back, but sending angels to gather his people.

Much of the language of

these verses is from the Old Testament. Understanding the words changes that take place are in his hands.

Verse 26 gives a clear picture of the return of the Son of Man. The disciples could not have missed his referral to himself here as he used this title of himself often.

The old covenant concept of the faithful remnant is brought forward to the "church" concept of the new covenant. Both ideas represent God's elect. We can endure the difficulties of life with faith and confidence knowing that Jesus is coming again to gather his people.

**Counsel about preparation (13:32-35).** No one knows. If we attempt to calculate the time of Christ's return we will certainly be wrong. There are things even hidden from the Son of God. Jesus said earlier that only the father could assign who would sit at Jesus' right or left. It is clear that the

Father has the ultimate authority and knowledge of the return of his Son.

Take heed, keep on the alert; Would we live differently if it were today? Some people act as though their physical life will go on forever. Every day should be as if it were the great day when Jesus comes with the angels to gather his children.

Mark 13 does not contain all of the biblical teachings about the return of Christ. It is a wonderful opportunity to list ways that you can prepare for Christ's return.

Are you his child? Have you turned from your sin and turned to Jesus? In John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but through me." Ask him today to be your Savior. If you are his child, live as if he is coming for you today. It just might be so!

Grace Graham is Childhood Education Director at First Church, Gulfport.

## LIFE AND WORK

### Family ideals and realities

Genesis 24:67; 25:21, 27-28; 27:34-35, 41; 32:9-10; 33:1-4



By Jim Burnett

Reading the Bible often is a sweet experience that leaves you inches away from walking into heaven. Other times, however, digesting God's word is a bitter experience, for we see God's ideals for us and our families and just how far we are away from them.

The feelings of guilt begin to mount. Our mistakes become so obvious. If only we could turn back the hands of time. If only we could retract the cutting words we said to a family member. If only we could have swallowed our pride and made our marriage work. If only we could have spent more time with our little ones.

But my friends, God loves us anyway and he gives grace for

a new day.

**Strive to fulfill the ideals (24:67; 25:21).** Isaac's love for his wife, Rebekah, is one of God's ideals for the Christian home. Their love for each other led them to desire children. But Rebekah had some physical problems that prohibited her from conceiving. So Isaac prayed for her and God answered.

When the children came, they each saw them as gifts from God. Do you see your children as gifts? Do you see other's children as gifts from above? Just look into the eyes of the little boys and girls and you will see the fingerprints of your heavenly Father. Oh I know how contrary they can be sometimes. But still the image of

God is clearly there.

Cherish them. Love them. Protect them, for this is your privilege and responsibility. And pray that abortion in America would end. There are so many couples who can't have children and want them and yet thousands of babies are being slaughtered daily in abortion clinics. It just doesn't make sense.

**Face the realities (25:27-28; 27:34-35, 41).** Granted that some children are easier to love than others, parents must fight the temptation of parental favoritism. There are no winners in the home of families where parents show partiality.

Isaac's love for Esau over Jacob was obvious. Likewise, Rebekah's love for Jacob over Esau was transparent. Consequently, there was tension and stress between Isaac and Rebekah as well as between Jacob and Esau.

This parental partiality and sibling rivalry led to an ugly

deception whereby Jacob stole his brother's blessing. This caused such a rift between these brothers that Esau pledged to kill Jacob. Jacob got out of town!

Husbands and wives should never let their children drive a wedge between them. The marriage relationship must take priority. When the marriage is strong, parents will naturally encourage good, healthy relationships between their offspring.

**Trust in God for help (32:9-10).** Jacob had done his brother dirty and now wanted to come back home. Years had passed but had Esau's bitterness toward his brother?

Sometimes the hardest thing to do is face an infraction against a sibling or another family member. In fact, it's so hard that some never do. Unfortunately, there are mothers and daughters who have not spoken in years and brothers who continue holding grudges against one another. Pride perpetuates their estrangement.

How this must sadden the

heart of God, for Jesus spilt his blood to enable us to forgive. We must allow God to change our hearts like he did with Jacob.

Jacob was not the same man coming home as when he left. The Lord had done surgery on his heart. He was now humble and transparent. Jacob's godly remorse gave room for divine intervention.

Would you trust God to help you right the wrongs with family members? Would you give him room to work in your life?

**Do what you can do (33:1-4).** Reconciliation with a brother, sister, father, mother, or anyone else is never a guaranteed success. Jacob was willing to restore his relationship with his estranged brother but he had no assurance that Esau was game. So he staggered his family and possessions and braced for the worst.

He did all he could do and trusted God for the rest. God came through for him and so will he for you.

Burnett is pastor of Raymond Road Church, Jackson.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### Courage and hope in life and death

Revelation 1:9-20



By Harold W. Simmons

This lesson on Revelation ends our cursory survey of the New Testament. John, the beloved disciple, wrote from the Isle of Patmos to which he had been exiled because of preaching the truth. From the shores of modern day Turkey on a clear day, you can see the blurred outline of Patmos. John wrote in veiled wording (apocalyptic writing) to reach across the watery divide to encourage believers who were under persecution. John reaches across the

expanse of time to encourage us today.

Understand that John had to hide his God-given message in language that his readers would comprehend and his captors could not. Some believe that John wrote about the various ages of the church. I believe that he wrote under the leadership of God to churches of his day and to us to encourage all who read.

**A message for persecuted churches (1:9-11).** John began by explaining his current circumstance because he wanted the readers to know that he was

experiencing the same problems they faced. I believe that John had been pastor of the church at Ephesus and had access to the other churches of Asia Minor which are in relatively close proximity to Ephesus. He continued to explain when and how he received the visions that he was directed to record and share with the churches of Asia Minor. He was completely pliant and receptive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit on the Christian day of worship. This is an example for us today. If during worship on the Lord's Day we listen for God, he will reveal to us what we need to see for our lives.

**A vision of the glorified Lord (1:12-16).** Until John turned, all he knew was a "voice" speaking to him which had no identity. When he

turned, he had a vision of the glorified Lord. Every phrase and sentence of description about the risen Lord gives the picture of shining or gleaming. The Light of the World is indeed shining. John described the glorified Savior as exuding light, or one in whom there is no darkness. He gave the picture of the glorified Christ as standing among the seven candlesticks or the churches. Christ is present in his church. In his right hand are seven stars. The stars represent the pastors of the seven churches. They are lesser lights but are "points of light" in a dark world. They are in a position of honor and security in the right hand of the Son. The sharp double-edged sword coming from his mouth is the word of truth.

**Words of courage and hope (1:17-20).** John stated that he fell at the feet of the Savior as

though he were dead and the Lord offered comfort to him by the personal touch which came with reassuring words. The Lord assured John by telling him that he, the Risen Lord, was the total of revelation, the first and the last. He wanted John to understand that he had overcome death and hell. No matter what comes in this life, it will not be as powerful as the Victor. John was commanded to communicate the message to others by the written word.

God speaks to us. Through troubles and trials, we become brothers and companions in suffering. We are not the only persons who have problems. We do not have to worry about anything because our Lord has overcome everything that could possibly threaten us.

Simmons is pastor of Hebron Church, Grenada.

## Kids Page



### Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx  
copyright 1998

CAB UGVE DNABP WL  
WE, WC, UGQY PQ HQ  
HMCCQEQQ CAB PAMB  
CVMNEL, PQ LGVNN EVZQ  
WE RVEWQYENP? HME  
WC, UGQY PQ OA UQNN,  
VYO LMCCQB CAB WE, PQ  
EVZQ WE RVEWQYENP,  
EGWL WL VXXQREVHNQ  
UWEG DAO.  
CWBLE RQEQB EUA:  
EUQYEP

Clue: R = P

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Romans Eleven Thirty-three.

# Russian students seek English, find Jesus

KHABAROVSK, Russia (BP) — For decades, communism was the bedrock of Khabarovsk, an industrial city in the Russian Pacific. But communism's failure has left many people as empty and barren as the trees that tower over them through the dark Russian winter.

A visitor can sense an ideological vacuum among those who live in cities like Khabarovsk, once a stalwart of Soviet communism. But the vacuum leaves room for an interest in spiritual matters, especially among the next generation.

Home to more than a dozen learning institutions or colleges, Khabarovsk is a magnet for the young of Russia's Far East. And as joint ventures with American firms emerge, students are taking note — and rushing to learn English with help from people like Randy and Robin Covington, Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries.

The Covingtons don't advertise their classes because the response is too overwhelming. But they've found that many students who hear about them by word of mouth are interested not only in learning English, but in learning about God as well. Several have decided to follow Jesus Christ and have become part of a church very different from other traditional Russian Baptist churches.

"It's amazing to see how quickly the interest in English kind of goes by the wayside and studying the Bible becomes more important to them," said Robin Covington. "Almost immediately they start to attend our Bible studies and other activities."

"It's been exciting to see how many have come to know the Lord from that start."

A central part of the Khabarovsk ministry is the Christian Student Center. Started by IMB workers who first came to the area in 1993, the center provides young believers a place to fellowship, to grow and to bring friends who are not Christian.

Some time ago, Natasha came to the center because of what it offered. But the Christlike love of the missionaries drew her to seek God. Now, she's a glowing witness to the love of Jesus Christ among her peers.

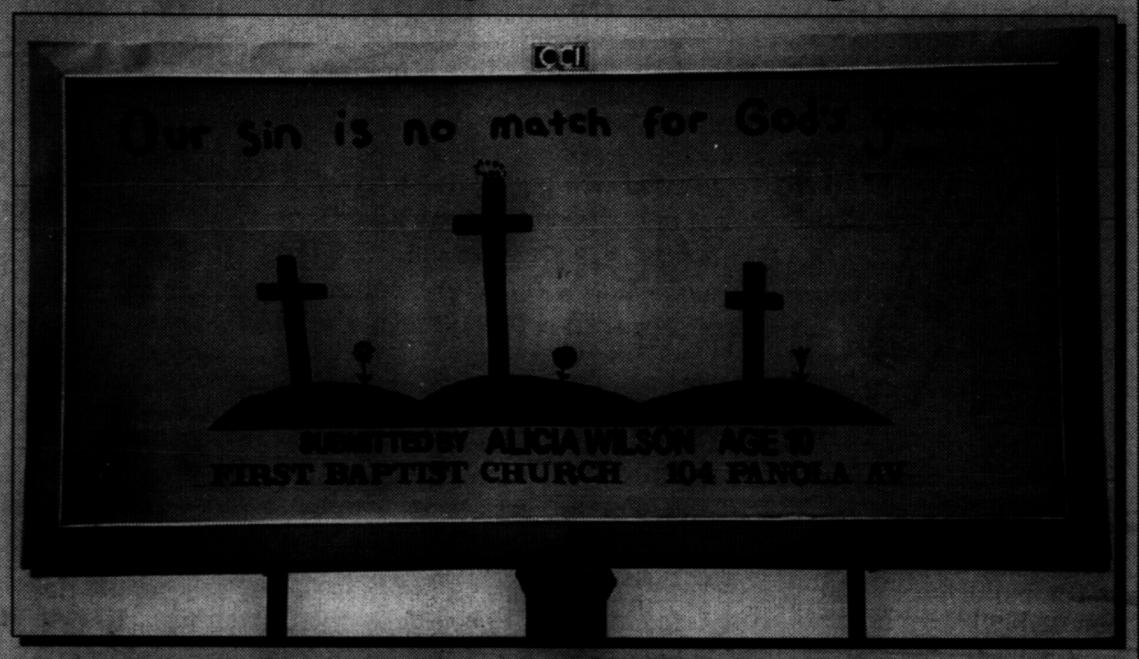
Natasha also plays a vital role in Transformation Baptist Church. Started in 1994, Transformation is unlike most Russian churches. At Transformation, students are welcome to come just as they are.

"Usually a student ministry grows out of a local church ministry," said Randy Covington. "In this situation it has been just the exact opposite. We began with a student ministry."

Since students knew nothing about Christian church life, it was easy to form them into a church body, he adds. "We began to meet just on Sunday mornings with them and conduct a small worship time. And then with the sponsorship of the local Baptist Union, we decided this is a good place to start a new church."

The Covingtons are excited by what they see happening in the lives of these students and in the new church. No longer are they spiritually dormant like barren Russian trees. Instead, like Natasha, they reflect the radiance of Christ. Others will surely be drawn by it.

## Sending the Message



Alicia Wilson, age 10, was selected as the winner of a children's contest held at First Church, Batesville. Her drawing was posted on the church's rented billboard in Batesville for Easter (above). (BR special photo).

## Russian Baptists seeking foothold

MOSCOW (BP) — The race is on in Russia. In this vast and complex republic where countless local kingpins resist the gospel, Baptists and other evangelicals are pitted against time to secure a foothold for the King of Kings.

Gone are the days of the glitzy, big-name crusades that came rushing in from the West to fill the spiritual vacuum just after the former Soviet Union declared religious liberty for itself in the heady days of 1990.

"Almost every Sunday, at almost every service we attend where Russian brothers are preaching, one or two folks come forward and accept the Lord," said missionary Ed Tarleton, who directs Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB) efforts in Russia. "That starts adding up when you consider multiple services across the whole country."

The gains haven't come without some setbacks, mostly from local political officials.

In one case, officials ousted an independent Baptist missionary. Local officials also have blocked church programs and events, or denied groups the right to worship in leased buildings.

The once-simple public processes of obtaining missionary visas and building permits have taken on cumbersome new dimensions, even in IMB-related efforts.

However, while a window is open, Russian Baptists are urging churches in other countries to move fast. Pastors want help.

"Despite all the obstacles we have here, the potential and freedom to grow are still overwhelming," Tarleton said.

## The color of arithmetic

Directions: Use your addition and subtraction skills to color the picture below. For example: in the block marked "2-1," the answer is "1," so that block should be colored 'yellow' according to the colors and numbers listed at right below crayons.

